

A Suffering People – Teaching Notes¹

(Updated 1/2020; Dr. Baines, Jr.)

Read: I Peter 4:12-19

Summary Highlights: Peter tells his readers not to think it strange that they are suffering. On the contrary, they should expect some suffering. They are to rejoice as those who partake in the suffering of Jesus Christ. Peter urges his readers to make sure they are suffering for the right reason. Suffering for being a Christian is a good thing. However, suffering because of the sin in our lives is terrible. Peter says that judgment and suffering must come. It starts with the Church, but it also hits those outside of the Church. In fact, it is worst for those outside the Church. Peter urges his readers to make sure that their suffering is according to God's will. He wants them to commit themselves to God and to continue to do good.

Introduction: A key idea in today's lesson is that believers should endure suffering with trust in God. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to develop the faith to endure suffering.

Key Points:

1. Fiery trials. Notice in vs. 12 that fiery trials can be expected. Trials may come as financial troubles, health challenges, or relational problems. Trials may manifest itself in the form of being discriminated against. However, trials, in whatever form, should be expected. *Let's work on bracing ourselves for the fiery trials that may come our way.* On one side, we need to enjoy the moment. But on the other hand, we must make sure we trust God more than the enjoyment of the money, relationships, or health that we currently have.

2. Rejoicing in trials. Notice in vs. 13 the urging to rejoice in our trials because to suffer with Christ leads to our being glorified with Him. There is nothing joyful about trials. However, there is great joy in knowing that trials don't last always. In fact, for believers, there is resurrection and eternal life with Christ. *Let's rejoice about the hope that we have in being with Christ, after our trials.*

3. Suffering for the right reason. Notice in vs. 15 that we are to make sure we are not suffering because of our sins. Sometimes things are rough and tough in our lives, not because of our relationship with Jesus, but because of our sins. We are reaping what we have sown. *Let's work on living according to God's will, instead of sinning.* At the core of God's will is to love God, ourselves, and others with the blessed assurance of having accepted Jesus as our savior by faith.

¹ Prepare to discuss the following: What is the point, what scripture supports the point, what is the application sentence, and what is an example of living by the material? After the material is covered, be prepared to answer the following: Which point do you want to spend extra time on, why do you think this point is so important, and what tips do you have for living by this material, in spite of the challenges? **What is one thing you will take from this session and work on, in regard to your discipleship goals?**

4. Shameful suffering. Notice in vs. 16 that there is to be no shame, when suffering is related to one's being a Christian. However, when suffering is related to sin, we should be so ashamed that we repent of our sins. Worst than seeing so many supposed Christians sinning is to see so many who are not ashamed and consequently not repenting. There are too many who are not ashamed of "shaking," not ashamed of being poor stewards of their health, not ashamed of robbing God, and not ashamed of not witnessing like they said they would do, in the Church Covenant. *Let's be examples of those who are so ashamed of our "suffering causing sins" that we repent.* We should also encourage others to do the same.

5. Suffering without Christ. Notice in vs. 18 that the suffering of those who have Christ is no joke; however, the suffering of those who don't have Christ is even worst. *Let's work harder on getting our loved ones and others saved, so they will not experience the suffering of those who are lost.* Every believer ought to work on being able to share the plan of salvation, in addition to inviting and bringing loved ones to church and Christ.

6. Being committed. Notice in vs. 19 the urging to commit one's self to God. There are things in this world that make no sense to us. Some "good people" suffer so much. Some "bad people" seem to live so well. However, we must learn to trust God to work things out for the good of His people. *Let's work on trusting God.* Being consistent in prayerful study and obedience with the support of other disciples will go a long way in this area.